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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the use of oral dialogue journals as an integral part of foreign language instruction. It discusses the strengths and weaknesses of oral (audiotape) journals, and compares them to written journals. The paper then explores the use of oral dialogue journals in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to adult students in Morocco and in the teaching of intermediate Spanish at the college level. Teacher and student opinions on the efficacy of oral dialogue journals are then examined. In addition to providing opportunities for students to gain in knowledge and awareness of oral and aural aspects of a second language, oral journals were found to significantly enhance the relationship between the teacher and student, to increase the students' level of confidence, and to allow students to develop ways to work on aspects of language acquisition consistent with their individual goals and learning styles. (MDM)

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ORAL DIALOG JOURNALS: A LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the possibilities of using oral dialog journals as a method of foreign language instruction. The emphasis is on allowing students to use their oral journals to personalize their language learning. The author relates her experiences using this method in the teaching of Spanish and EFL.

The development of a technique for recording and responding is studied from the students' and teacher's perspectives. In addition to providing opportunities for students to gain in knowledge and awareness of oral and aural aspects of a second language, oral journals were found to significantly enhance the relationship between the teacher and student, to increase the students' level of confidence, and to allow students to develop ways to work on aspects of language acquisition consistent with their individual goals and learning styles.

The individualization of instruction implies the dedication of additional time and effort on the part of the teacher. This is the case of dialog journals, in their oral as well as written forms. However, over the course of her experiences using oral journals, the author finds ways to respond effectively within limited time constraints. The benefits derived from oral journaling and the feedback from students indicate that the time spent on oral journals is well invested.

ERIC Descriptors:

Adult Education, Dialog Journals, Oral Language, Second Language Instruction, Teaching Methods

PREFACE

In A Way and Ways (1980), Earl Stevick states that the teaching methods he presents are his versions, his interpretations, of methods developed by others. His book "sets before the reader only one way . . .of looking at the methods and using the techniques." His way is only one way of many. Likewise, my approach to oral dialog journals reflects my own teaching style and my personal beliefs about language learning. The oral journal is a tool that can be used by different teachers and students to accomplish different ends in different ways. I will present one way, which is my way.

I will also present many ways, which are my students' ways. These represent my students' beliefs about language learning, and their knowledge of themselves as language learners. My students chose to use their oral journals to meet their own individual needs, as they perceived them.

The goal of this paper is to encourage the use of oral journals as a tool for teaching language. Although I had often used written dialog journals in my teaching, this tool in its oral form was completely new to me when I first began this study. This paper documents our voyage of discovery, as my students and I learned to use oral journals effectively. It

is my hope that it will help those who are using oral journals for the first time to become aware of available procedures, time constraints, feelings associated with oral journals and the possibilities and advantages of taking a learner-centered approach to oral dialog journals.

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INTRODUCTION

Students go through a process of finding their own voices when they study a foreign language. If there are many students in the class, some voices may get lost in the crowd. Some students are shy and don't speak out as much as their classmates. Others may feel uncomfortable speaking a foreign language in front of their peers. Oral dialog journals provide a way for students to have a one-on-one conversation with their teacher on an audiotape. This not only allows students to practice speaking outside the classroom, but also helps them to become more aware of their own voices in a second language. Through oral dialog journals, this can be accomplished in the privacy of the students' own homes, outside of the public arena of the classroom.

Teachers may also find it difficult to develop an understanding of every student's needs, and to keep an open channel of communication with individual students. There often isn't enough time in class to get to know each student well. Oral journals allow teachers to keep a running, spoken dialog with each student outside of the classroom, approaching each dialog in the way that best suits each learner.

Oral dialog journals can be used in a myriad of ways, ranging from controlled activities to free speaking. They can be used to work on

accuracy or to work on fluency, to share ideas about life or to ask questions about language usage. Used within a learner-centered approach, I have found them to be an excellent tool for encouraging student initiative, allowing students to determine which areas they would like to focus on in their language acquisition. As a result, they have served to deepen the understanding and trust between student and teacher. Oral journals, as I have used them, allow students to make their own choices, an important part of a learner-centered class. This paves the way for students to become experts on their own learning styles and to develop their own strategies.

In this paper, I will examine my experiences using oral dialog journals to teach EFL (English as a Foreign Language) in Morocco and SFL (Spanish as a Foreign Language) in Vermont, first noting some characteristics that make oral dialog journals different from their written counterparts. In Chapter 2, I will discuss how my interest in using oral journals was sparked, and how I found it to fit my personal philosophy of teaching. The development of the process of creating an oral journal will be explored from the teacher's point of view as well as from the students', in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively. In these chapters I will draw on data from my own written journals, student questionnaires, interviews with students, and the dialog journal tapes themselves. In Chapter 5 I will describe some of the benefits that can be derived through different uses of

oral journals, citing examples from this study and from the literature. In Chapter 6 I will answer some questions that I have frequently been asked about oral journaling. In the epilogue, I let the students speak for themselves, by sharing some insightful feedback from students who reflect on several of the issues discussed in this paper.

CHAPTER ONE

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORAL AND WRITTEN JOURNALS

Definitions

An oral dialog journal functions much like a written dialog journal, in that it is a recorded conversation between a teacher and a student. It is a private conversation, and is not evaluated by the teacher. It takes place on a regular basis, and provides a record of the exchange of ideas between the teacher and student.

Joy Peyton and Leslie Reed (1990) provide the following description of a dialog journal:

> A dialog journal, put very simply, is a conversation between a teacher and an individual student. However, this conversation differs from all others they may have, in or out of the classroom; it is *written*, it is completely private, and it takes place regularly and continually throughout an entire school year or semester . . . Students *write* regularly in the journal, as much as they want and about whatever they choose, and the teacher *writes* back-not grading or correcting the *writing*, and not responding with simple platitudes or evaluative comments such as "Good!" or "Interesting point!" The teacher is a partner in a conversation, who accepts what is *written* and responds as directly and openly as possible, while keeping in mind the student's language ability and interests. (italics mine.)

The above quote could easily describe an oral dialog journal, by substituting the verb "speak" for "write" whenever it appears. But while the two media may seem similar at first glance, the oral journal also

provides some unique opportunities to work with the spoken language, reflecting individual learners' needs and learning styles.

McGrath (1992) identifies three types of oral journals: the audiotape journal, the cassette notebook, and the oral dialog journal. The audiotape journal "was developed to increase the student's fluency, to raise her awareness of pronunciation difficulties, to give her a chance to speak with a native English speaker, and to provide for more efficient use of time for the teacher." In this type of journal, the student speaks about a topic, and the teacher responds to the content, affirming the student's efforts, and then comments on the pronunciation or grammar. The cassette notebook is similar to the audiotape journal, but is used to complete specific assignments related to a variety of language skills. It can be used to practice grammar or vocabulary that was studied in class, or to produce notes from which to write a composition. The oral dialog journal, as presented by McGrath, has "an emphasis on students discovering their identity within the new culture in which they are living." An in-depth class disscussion leads to a journal topic which the student discusses on tape. (McGrath, 1992) Although the oral dialog journals discussed in this paper fall into all three of these categories, they would be classified primarily as audiotape journals, according to the above definitions. This is due to the emphasis placed on fluency, pronunciation and student initiative in almost all of the journals.

I have been an avid fan of written dialog journals for many years, having used them long before I started using oral journals. I find that the personal connection they provide can significantly enhance the student-teacher relationship, and that the opportunity for the student to direct the dialog allows the student to cover areas of high personal interest, thus increasing motivation. After experiencing and experimenting with both media, I have seen several differences between the two types of journal which should be taken into consideration before deciding on which type of journal to use with a particular class. These differences include the novelty of coming face to face with a permanent record of one's own spoken language, the amount of time available in the teacher's schedule, affective factors, possible ways of using the journal, the question of whether or not to correct, and comprehension problems which have different causes and solutions in oral and written media.

Permanence

One major difference between speech and writing that manifests itself in student journals is the fact that writing is usually permanent, whereas speech generally vanishes in the moment that it is uttered. In an oral journal, this is not the case. The oral dialog journal is a unique type of journal, in that the student, as well as the teacher, are creating a record of a spoken exchange of ideas. It is a situation in which speech takes on a

characteristic normally reserved for writing. In learning to write, the student has probably had the opportunity to step back and look at his or her own writing, reread and revise compositions, and read a teacher's comments or responses many times. But the oral journal may be the first time the student has the opportunity to look at his or her spoken language in this way, by listening to recent entries, rewinding and listening to early entries, or listening to a teacher's verbal response again and again. A beginning student could save tapes, much as he or she might save an early composition, and listen to them again when he or she has reached a more advanced level. Not only may a student's language level change over time; the ideas may also change, providing an interesting record of personal growth.

Time

Time is also an important consideration when making the decision to do oral journals, as it is with written journals. In the process of developing time-efficient ways to do oral journals, I have come to the conclusion that it is possible to do oral journals just as quickly and personally as written ones. The amount of time it takes depends on the number of students that participate, the length of the entries, the frequency of the exchange, and the procedure the teacher chooses to follow in responding. It is possible to take only a few minutes per student and

still respond effectively.

Affective Factors

The content and style of both written and oral journals can be intimate, chatty, or emotional, and express a wide range of sentiments. The directness of the tone of voice in an oral journal, however, can add another layer of meaning to the message. The feelings behind a certain statement can often be heard in a way that may not be captured in a student's writing. The tape can also record background music that the student may have put on, helping to reflect the mood of the moment. This can help the teacher to feel present at the time of the recording, thus making the experience more powerful and more personal. Lastly, for many, speaking into a recorder may feel less like work and more spontaneous than sitting down and writing.

Students doing written journals sometimes draw in the margins, attach newspaper clippings or photos, or otherwise enhance their journals. Oral journalers often incorporate music, either by playing recorded music or singing "live." There is also a tendency for students to involve other people, by recording friends and family members as well as themselves. In these ways, both written and oral journals allow for elaboration of the text through creative means.

To Correct or Not to Correct?

With oral dialog journals the error correction debate takes on a new twist; it's simply not possible to mark up an audiotape with red, green, or any other color ink. Many of my students, when doing written dialog journals, have requested correction, or have complained when their writing was not corrected. So far, no oral dialog journaling student has approached me in person to request overt correction from me. Several of them have corrected themselves through my modelling of correct forms, and seem to do this naturally, as they might do in a conversation with a native or advanced speaker. They have also used the tape to ask outright whether a particular form or choice of word was correct, or to ask for a translation of a particular word or sentence.

Dealing with incomprehensible tapes is rather different from dealing with incomprehensible written journals, in that the breakdown in communication could stem from pronunciation as well as from grammar. This turn of events presents a potentially useful situation in which the teacher and student can develop ways to overcome these problems and achieve communication. The clarification techniques practiced may then be transferred to other situations. (See tapescript, p. 19.)

Student Preference

The most basic difference between oral and written dialog journals is

the medium itself. One may be more appropriate than the other, depending on whether the students want or need to develop oral or written fluency. Several students have commented that, if they had enough time, they would like to do both. One of my students, who was doing both types of journal simultaneously for two different classes, wrote, "for the journal and the tape, I think each of them has his work, [sic] for example, whereas the journal helps me for writing, the tape helps me for pronunciation." Another student commented, "The fact that I had to write was a big deal; I was much more restricted in what I could say. And here, I'm restricting myself, but I can comment at any point if I want to." Yet another student pointed out this difference, speaking about oral journals:

> It's much more spontaneous for me, the way I have been approaching it. With my written journal, I've got my dictionary, I've got my 501 Spanish Verbs, I've got my 3 rolls of paper on the floor; I do a lot more revising and things like that, whereas this, I listen to the response, flip on the tape, start rambling, flip off the tape - it's a little less structured for me, and less pressure.

This student outlined a basic difference in procedure between written and oral dialog journals that turned out to be true for many students. Both ways of journaling can be useful in different situations, as shown in the following table.

TABLE 1

A COMPARISON OF ORAL AND WRITTEN JOURNALS

aspect	oral journals	written journals
equipment	audiotape, taperecorder	pencil and paper
skills practiced	speaking, listening, writing	writing, reading
other skills	pronunciation, intonation, stress	spelling, punctuation
embellishments	auditory, ie. music	visual, ie. pictures
affective	creates mood, expresses emotion through tone	emotion depends on control of written language
error correction explicit	can be made in teacher's response	can be made over student writing or in margins
modelling	student must remember, or go back and listen	can be underlined for emphasis
permanence	novelty of being able to listen to voice over time	student has probably saved writing before
accessibility	time-consuming to go back and listen to previous entries	easy to refer to previous entries
spontaneity	requires little preparation; can be done at any time	may require use of dictionary, more time spent in organization

CHAPTER TWO

SCOPE OF MY INVESTIGATION

EFL in Morocco

I first began using oral dialog journals when I was teaching in Morocco. The age range of my students was anywhere from 14 to 30, and the students attended English class for a variety of reasons. Some came to learn English for their jobs, others because they were interested in learning English for personal reasons such as travel, and many attended primarily for social purposes. I used oral journals with two classes, a beginning class with a grammar based syllabus and an advanced pronunciation class. I used oral journals with two out of twenty students in the beginning class, and all eleven students in the advanced pronunciation course.

I had been fascinated with the enigma of teaching pronunciation for quite some time, which led me to request the opportunity to teach a pronunciation class. I had also had many positive experiences using written dialog journals in the past, and was using written journals with two other classes at the time. I became interested in using oral dialog journals as an alternative to written dialog journals, reasoning that through them

students could practice oral fluency, communication and pronunciation. Two of my beginning students volunteered to do journals after I passed around the following description (translated here from the original in French):

> I am in the process of researching different techniques for teaching English, and I would like to use a new technique with you. In this technique, the student records a message for the teacher on a cassette, and the teacher records an answer. They can ask each other questions, also. The student should choose the topic of conversation. You can talk about your daily routine, sports, your English class... The messages you record can be long or short. If you're interested, you need to have a tape recorder at home. I will only be able to do this activity with 3 or 4 students. If you're interested, please see me after class. Thank you!

I kept the description of the process and the content simple and fairly open, because I wanted the students to be able to take the initiative to use their oral journals in whatever way they felt most comfortable and to use them in the way that best suited their perceived needs. Since I had no idea how time-consuming this activity might be for me, and because I wanted to be able to study the students' use of their journals, I decided to try to limit the activity to students who showed high interest. Of course, if more than 3 or 4 students had brought me tapes I would certainly have allowed them to participate.

While my use of oral dialog journals with my beginning class was planned, I started using oral dialog journals with my pronunciation class almost by default. This class consisted of 11 advanced students who were

taking the course because they felt they needed extra work on pronunciation, and in many cases because they wanted to socialize with their friends. I asked all of my students to purchase tapes at the beginning of the course so that they could record seven prepared questions about pronunciation and their personal answers. (See page 22.) I used these questions and answers to analyze their pronunciation of each phoneme in the English language, then had them practice recording sentences that contained the sounds that they had the most difficulty with. Each tape was individualized, so that each student had custom-designed exercises to practice. After this, I wasn't sure what to do with the tapes, so I had them record messages for me that I answered, and we soon began to have dialogs.

Spanish in the U.S.

In both of my classes in Morocco, I used oral journals over the space of about a month. Upon my return to the United States, I used oral journals in an intermediate Spanish class at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont over a two month period. There were eight students in this class; seven of them were currently enrolled in an MAT program specializing in English for Speakers of Other Languages, and thus were unique in that they had a special interest in teaching techniques and learning styles. Since I was team-teaching, the other teacher and I

decided to have half of the students do oral journals with me, while the other half did written journals with the other teacher. We allowed the students to choose which form of journaling they preferred to use.

While I was working on developing a process for responding to journal entries that took into account my teaching style, philosophy of teaching, the individual students involved and the conditions I was working under, my students were developing a myriad of ways to use oral journals that fit their individual goals and learning styles. For this reason, my students were the prime source of uses for dialog journals; their creativity provided me with a wealth of ideas for future use of oral journals. Some things that students focused on through their journals were: pronunciation, communicating personal needs, overcoming oral communication problems, introducing elements of their personal lives to me, fluency, grammar, listening, student initiative, creativity, sharing cultural information, writing, dictations, vocabulary, and self-evaluation. These are all results of the students' personal agendas, and came out of their own interests and their willingness to try new ideas. I believe that this list is only the beginning. In Chapter 5, "The Benefits," I will examine in more detail different ways that students met these goals through their journals.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE PROCESS

Exploring the Process in Morocco

My first use of oral dialog journals was with my beginning level class in Rabat, Morocco. After explaining what oral journals were to the class, two students expressed an interest. Rostom brought me his tape at the following class meeting, and Maha brought me hers the next day. Their first messages were relatively short - less than one minute - but the recording of my initial responses to them took quite a long time.

I decided to go to a quiet room and where I could listen to each entry several times without any interruptions. As I listened, I tried to make a mental list of everything that was said, and I made an effort to respond to each topic. I recorded one sentence at a time, pausing between entries to collect my thoughts and to decide on my next sentence. I didn't want to speak so slowly that my voice sounded unnatural, but I wanted my students to be able to follow me easily, so that they wouldn't give up. I wasn't sure how much more difficult it would be for them to understand me on an audiotape than it was to understand me in class.

At first, I felt uncomfortable with the sound of my own voice. I erased some sentences two or three times, recording over each entry until I felt that it was good enough - not too slow and not too fast. I felt that my discomfort at the idea of listening to my own voice on a recording was positive, in that it would help me to sympathize with students that might also feel uncomfortable listening to their voices in English.

I returned the tapes to my students at the next class meeting, and the following session they handed them in to me again. The second entries were both about two minutes long, more than twice as long as the first ones. I decided that it would be best to take notes on the content, so that I could be sure to respond to everything I wanted to address. I had initially felt some resistance on my part to the idea of either the student or the teacher incorporating writing, since I wanted the journals to be a purely oral/aural experience for my students as well as for me. I believed that if I had to resort to writing, the students would probably have to write, too.

The Use of Writing

At this point I stopped to reflect on what kind of writing I wanted us to avoid, and for what reasons. I decided that it would be best for the students to avoid writing out a script and then reading it onto the tape, since this would not contribute to the development of oral fluency and spontaneity. On the other hand, I felt that taking notes on what was said

in the previous entry was a different use of writing than jotting down notes about what I was going to say, or reading onto the cassette. Taking notes allowed me to give a more complete, personal answer. Another advantage to taking notes on content and keeping them for future reference was that this would give me a record of the conversations that could be scanned, in a way that an audiotape could not.

As I progressed with my journals I gained self confidence and rarely erased or re-recorded entries. The students also seemed to be gaining a certain amount of self-confidence, and were speaking more. The students seemed to understand me remarkably well, so I worried less about speaking slowly. I wondered if students were using my speech as a model, something I had often often observed in written journals.

Clarification

I had anticipated more comprehension difficulties in oral journals than I usually encountered in the written kind. Since feedback was delayed, I had no way of knowing whether my dialog partners were following me until I received a response. Although there were occasional breakdowns in communication, my students and I had far fewer difficulties than I had expected. In no instance did I have to speak to any of my students in person in order to clarify anything I didn't understand from their tapes. By asking for clarification on what I didn't understand, or by

paraphrasing what I thought had been said, I was able to clear up any misunderstandings in three recordings or less.

The technique I used to achieve clarification was to rephrase what I had understood, thus making sure that I had understood it correctly, and then to ask the student to fill in the gaps. I wanted to focus on what I had understood, so as not to diminish the student's self-confidence, and to show that most of the message was getting through. I had the "understandee-understander" model from Curran's (1976) Counsel-Learning in mind during this process of negotiating meaning. As the "understander" I wanted to demonstrate that I had understood the message and was listening in a non-judgmental way. The following exchange illustrates how Rostom and I overcame our first communication barriers (the symbol "???" represents incomprehensible speech):

Hi, Linnea! . . . Uh, you like to know how many brother I have. We are six, five brothers and one sister. ??? is 23 years old, he's a student at the university, ??? and he will go to United States ??? continue his studies in economics. The second ???, 19 years old. He ??? Dallas, ??? and marketing. The third is Rostom, 18 years old. ??? United States to continue my studies but I think it is very difficult to have a visa. And my sister, Camilia, 15 years old. She is beautiful. And my brother ???, 13 years old. He gets into trouble . . . And the ??? in my family is Khalid. ??? He ??? 3 years old . . . We live in Rabat city since 1986. And my ??? in the east of Morocco. My mother doesn't work; she stays at home . . . I think that's all, but I have some questions. I'd like to know the steps that you pass in your life? And, do you have some information about the visa? And the life in the United States? I can give you a lesson in Arabic next week if you like. . .

Hello, Rostom! How are you? Umm, I listened to your recording, and I understood some things, but I had some trouble understanding a little bit. So, I'm going to repeat the principal things that I understood in your recording . . . You told me about your family, and you said that you have one brother who's 23, he's a university student, and he will continue his studies in the United States in Economics, your second

brother is 19, he lives in Dallas and he studies Marketing, your third brother is 18 - oh, maybe the third brother was you - I'm not sure. And you said that you would like to go to the United States to study, but it's difficult to get a visa. Your sister is 15 and she's beautiful. You have a brother who's 13, and he gets into trouble. And I think you have a brother who's 3 years old, then you said that you've lived in Rabat since 1986, and someone in your family lived in the east of Morocco. And you said that your mother doesn't work, and she usually stays at home. Then you said that you have 3 questions for me. The first question, I didn't understand, so you'll have to repeat it. The second question was whether I had any information about getting a visa, or the TOEFL . . . Your third question was about life in the U.S. Well, that's a very big question, and I don't know where to start! I think that in some ways, life in the US is different from life in Morocco, and in some ways it's the same . . . So, when you answer me, tell me if you understood everything, and tell me if what I understood about your family was correct . . .

Hello, Linnea, how are you? I'm sorry for my absence on Monday. I was ill. I had had a toothache. I think you understood almost about my family except my third brother - that's me. And that's my father who lived in east Morocco. He worked in an ??? And my first question was the stages or the steps you passed in your arrival ??? Morocco. And you said that you didn't have any information about the visa, and you thought that my, uh, brother knows more that ah, you . . . Uh, you said that the question about United States was very big. I agree with you, that is different and similar . . .

Hello, Rostom, how are you doing? Um, I just listened to your tape, and I could understand everything except one sentence. You said something like, "If you want to something-something, you can give me some information about it." So I couldn't quite understand that. But everything else, I understood very well. OK, the first question that you asked me, a couple days ago, was about the steps I passed on my way to Morocco. I don't know what you mean by the steps I passed (emphasized), but the first step of my trip was . . .

I found this negotiating of meaning to be very productive, as each new entry built on what was understood in the last, and the gray areas of doubt were gradually filled in. It seemed to be an effective way to practice clarification techniques. I was especially fascinated that Rostom turned the process around and became the "understander" for me, verifying that he

had understood my responses before going ahead with his new messages, answering my questions or asking questions of his own.

Opening Channels of Communication

I was also able to be an understanding listener for Maha, in a different sense. One of the greatest benefits I derived from this initial use of oral journals was the fact that it sensitized me to the needs of a student who I suspect would not have spoken up otherwise. Maha's first entry was:

> *I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak of myself. I love your lessons, but I have some difficulties in participation, then, I can't make communicate and build sentences. I think that ??? students in the class, excuse me, I want you to speak more clearly. My sister helps me to formulate my requests. Bye. Thank you.*

I responded:

> Hi, Maha! Do I pronounce your name correctly? Thank you very much for your tape. Do I speak too quickly in class? If I speak too quickly, you can tell me to speak more slowly. That's good that your sister can help you with your English. How old is your sister? What does she do? Can you tell me more about your family? Do you have any questions to ask me? I'll see you in class today. Good-bye!

While Maha's first entry was very soft-spoken and her voice often trembled, in her next entry her voice was warm and full of enthusiasm. She seemed very excited about the prospect of answering my questions. She also elaborated on her trouble with participation, advising me:

> *. . . don't you think that you should, when you prepare your lesson, consider that our class hasn't the same level at English, uh, then, I'm not able to answer to your questions as quickly as some students do. I suggest that you give us some time to think of the answers. Bye!*

Her call for help alerted me to the possiblity that other students, with whom I was not journaling, may have been having the same trouble. Maha's request thus changed my behavior in class with regard to wait time, and I became more aware of students that did not respond as quickly as their peers. In this way, a topic brought up in our private conversation affected the rest of the class.

From Controlled to Free Practice: Pronunciation Class

A week after I began using oral journals with my beginners, I started using them with my advanced pronunciation class. I initially used the tapes to make recordings for diagnostic purposes, and I would not have considered the tapes to be dialog journals at this stage. I asked each student to purchase a tape, and to record the following seven questions and their answers:

1. Do you think that good pronunciation is very important?
2. Why do you believe that?
3. Is it possible to talk like a native?
4. Are children, teenagers or adults better at foreign languages?
5. Do girls or boys have better pronunciation?
6. How should pronunciation ability be measured?
7. What goals do you have for this course?

These questions, in addition to dealing with the topic of pronunciation, contain almost all of the phonemes of the English language. I proceeded to analyse each tape and noted the pronunciation of each sound

on separate charts, one for each student.

I then responded on each tape, commenting on pronunciation and giving each student a "target sentence" to practice. For example, a student who had difficulty with final consonant clusters might practice, "He asked the students about the tests." I also suggested that we also have a conversation on their audiotapes; in addition to practicing their sentences, they could record messages for me, and I would answer them on the tapes. After the initial exchanges I stopped giving the students target sentences, and instead focused on producing more natural conversation.

Developing a System

I used the same system in responding to the advanced students' tapes that I had used with my beginning students with an additional step: I took notes on the phonological accuracy of their messages, as well as the content. In my responses I replied to their messages and tried to incorporate into my answers words that they had mispronounced in their last entries, again trying to show that I had understood their words, and hopefully, the meaning behind them. I also used their errors to plan my pronunciation lessons for the next class. Since I had a larger number of tapes to respond to now, I started working on a way to respond quickly and efficiently, while still giving each student individual attention. After experimenting with a variety of different methods, I developed the

following five guidelines:

1) to take notes as I listened so that I could respond to content

2) to jot down words that were difficult to understand because of inaccurate pronunciation or grammar and model correct forms by using them in my answer - or by pointing them out overtly

3) to jot down the contexts of words I couldn't understand and ask for clarification

4) to ask a few questions just in case the students couldn't think of anything to talk about

5) to respond "in kind," that is, to give responses similar in length and in content to my students' entries, showing that I had understood and related to their messages

I enjoyed my students' enthusiasm for sharing their culture with me through their oral journals. I was able to learn about Islam, Morocco, their families and friends, and was even treated to some traditional Arabic music, all of which I would probably have missed out on otherwise. One of my students sang for me; another one held the tape recorder up to the T.V. so that I could hear one of her favorite singers in concert.

Technical Difficulties

It seemed likely that there would be some technical difficulties arising from the use of recording equipment, but they were minimal with these particular groups. My beginning students had satisfactory recording equipment at home, as did most of my pronunciation students. Two of the students from the pronunciation class didn't have access to

working tape recorders, but one was able to borrow one from a friend and I lent my walkman to the other. My trusting him with my equipment seemed to have a positive effect on his attitude towards me and the activity at hand.

The average length of my Moroccan students' recordings were between two and four minutes, however, I usually took about half an hour to complete the process of listening and responding to each entry. I realized that if this technique were to be used in large classes, the teacher would need to be able to go through the tapes faster than that. I decided to pay closer attention to the amount of time spent on each tape, and to find ways to respond quickly but without sacrificing the benefits to be derived from oral journaling and the individualized attention it provided.

Getting Started in Spanish

I began using oral journals with an intermediate Spanish class two weeks after my return from Morocco. I gave even fewer instructions for their use than I had given to my Moroccan students; I simply told them in Spanish that it was similar to a written journal and that they could record whatever messages they liked for me.

My rationale for giving little direction was again to allow my students to use their journals in a way that best suited their needs as they perceived them. Also, since my Moroccan students had been so innovative, I wanted

to follow the same procedure of encouraging student initiative. Since most of my students were studying for an M.A.T. in English for Speakers of Others Languages (ESOL), they were familiar with journaling techniques. Four students did oral journals: Michelle, Susan, Amy and June.

The first tape I received was a recording Michelle had done of a passage from a Spanish text. I wasn't sure how to respond, so I commented on the content of the reading and on her pronunciation. While her command of the Spanish sound system was very good, she needed to work more on suprasegmentals, that is, aspects such as intonation and stress. While I had generally felt comfortable with my ability as a Spanish speaker, I began to wonder if my control of Spanish intonation and stress patterns was adequate to serve as a model. I found myself erasing my voice and re-recording myself, since I wanted to sound as much like a native speaker as possible, and I felt self-conscious about my voice in a way that I hadn't when speaking English. Michelle's reading took about six minutes, and I spent about thirty minutes working on my response.

The second tape I listened to was full of Susan's enthusiasm about the class and suggestions for future classes. She listed several grammar points that she wanted to study in class. I incorporated several of her suggestions into my subsequent lesson plans. Her entry was three minutes long, and I was able to answer in only eleven minutes.

The third tape, from June, was difficult to understand because there

was a lot of background noise. It was also very long! After 15 minutes she was still talking, so I had to finish listening to the tape in two sessions. This was the first tape I had received that I thought might justify the setting of a time limit for each recording.

I used a slightly different method of taking notes on this entry; I listed pronunciation problems, English words that she needed Spanish translations for, errors in grammar, and content. I tried to stick to the philosophy I had been developing of responding "in kind" to each entry. Since June had made this recording while she was cooking, I responded in my own kitchen, with the tea pot whistling in the background as I repeated, in context, the Spanish word for "boiling." This was a word she had been groping for in her entry.

Amy's entry was short and ended with some music. She asked me if I would like her to put music at the end of each entry; I said I thought that would be nice. Her entry was only five minutes long, but I spent about 25 minutes working on my response. I had now received an oral journal from all four participating students.

Error Correction

Michelle's second entry was another reading. I noted pronunciation problems, and again, I commented on my reaction to the passage she chose. I didn't feel very sure about the usefulness of her reading passages, but I

decided to let her follow through. She had commented to me after class that she felt this was the best use of an oral journal for her. I thought about finding a passage that I could read to her, but I didn't have time to select an appropriate one. Again, the entry was about five minutes long, and I spent about 25 minutes with it.

For Susan's second entry, I listed corrections and content, and I tried to incorporate corrections into my response in as natural a way as possible:

> *S: Pienso que tuvo un buena vacacion... soy alegre para tú. Para ti? Para tú...*
>
> *(I think you had a good vacation, and I'm happy for you.)*
>
> L: Me parece que pasaste unas vacaciones estupendas, y me alegro mucho por ti...
>
> (It seems like you had a wonderful vacation, and I'm happy for you.)

I was able to cut back on my response time, spending only nineteen minutes on a four minute entry from Susan. I decided to limit myself to listening to the students' entries only twice, and then responding.

At this point, during the second round of responses, I reevaluated the journal process so far and realized that one difference between the journals done in Spanish in the U.S. and those done in English in Morocco was that the Spanish journals seemed to be lacking in cultural content. I thought that perhaps it would be useful to talk about my experiences in Spain or Peru at some point on the tapes, or to ask the students about their

experiences in Spanish-speaking countries.

In my second response to June I stabilized my notetaking technique by making "form" and "content" columns on a page in my notebook as I listened to her entry. (See fig. 1.) This is the format that I used for the rest of the course. I listened to her entry twice, once focusing on form, including both grammar and pronunciation, and once listening for content. I checked off the errors that I corrected through modelling in my response, making an effort to correct the most important ones. I was pleased to see that she had picked up the word for "boiling" and was using it, although her conjugations were not quite accurate. It took 35 minutes to listen to her entry twice, and I spent 15 minutes answering.

Reflection

At this stage in my journaling I began to feel amazingly comfortable with how my Spanish sounded on tape. I began to think that I sounded like a native speaker. But I was also concerned about what the students were getting out of it. June's entries were so long - would she benefit more from the experience if she worked on smaller chunks of language? Would it be useful to start working on accuracy as well as fluency? Could error correction start coming into play once a dialog was established? In written journals it was relatively easy to correct errors by modelling the correct form in my response. In the past, if my students requested clearer error

Fig. 1. Two-column system, noting form and content.

forma:	contenido:
- yo herida mi te	Le encanta escuchar la cinta
- yo poner la te en mi taza	Le gusta hacer té
- estoy muy feliz que tú estaré aquí en varano	fue a Burlington con Amy
	quiere pasear conmigo este verano
¿te gusta lanaturales?	
- Te quiero ir a caminar en naturales	está contenta con la clase; quiere que yo siga hablando con la misma velocidad
- esta español clase	
- los otros estudiantes son muy ayuda para mi.	La cinta le ayuda
	descripción del novio ideal
	habla de Nuevo Méjico

correction in their written journals, I would often underline their mistakes and the corresponding correct forms in my responses. Since this was not possible in an oral format, I used modelling as the primary correction technique. I noticed, however, that June was consistently mispronouncing certain words, even though I used them several times in my responses.

Further Developments

In my second response to Amy, I used the form/content columns, again listening twice. She recorded music for me this time also. Since I was recording outside on the lawn and I didn't have any music with me, I sang a Spanish song for her at the end of my recording. This satisfied my self-imposed requirement to respond "in kind," and also added a cultural note to our dialog.

By Susan's third recording, I had noticed a great improvement in her use of the preterite tense, which I commented on in my answer. It was very rewarding for me to hear the material being covered in class incorporated into the oral journals. I was able to respond to her two minute recording in eleven minutes.

In Michelle's third recording, I continued with my two column system, but this time I replaced the columns for form and content with one column for pronunciation and one for vocabulary. I was able to identify vocabulary questions that she had, because she would either stop her

reading in order to ponder over unfamiliar words, or she would ask herself out loud what they meant. I only listened to her recording once. In my answer, I defined those words that had been new for her, and I read her an excerpt from another story.

June's next entry was only 10 minutes long, and took 17 to answer. I followed the same note-taking technique of noting form and content. She still had trouble with the pronunciation of "naturaleza," the Spanish word for "nature," but she was getting closer. I noted that her self-correction was very good at this point. I planned a short pronunciation lesson around problem words from her tape and from some other students' tapes as well.

Towards the end of the course I was spending less than 10 minutes on most entries, almost never more than 15. I think this is a realistic amount of time to dedicate to student journals, and I found it to be enough to be effective. The content of the journals, throughout the course, was usually related to class activities, life at school, social events and personal information, with the exception of Michelle's tapes, which were readings of texts. I found the content to be similar to that of written dialog journals I have done in the past. From the beginning of my work with oral dialog journals to the time of the writing of this paper, my response technique has developed from not writing at all when working with oral journals to using an organized note-taking system, which serves as a parallel written record of the journals. Table 2, on the following page, outlines the stages I went

through to develop my current response technique. At each stage, I give the pros and cons of that particular technique. These advantages and disadvantages are responsible for the changes between each stage.

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT OF RESPONSE TECHNIQUES

Stage	Description	Pros	Cons
Stage one	mental list of topics to respond to	spontaneous	difficult to respond to all
Stage two	taking notes on content	easy to respond to all topics	dependent on writing
Stage three	repeating what I understood, asking for clarification	student did the same; able to fill in the gaps	time consuming
Stage four	practicing target sentences	working on specific needs	less interesting; no context
Stage five	taking notes on phonological accuracy and content	modelled difficult sounds	only useful for students working on pronunciation
Stage six	listening to and re-recording my voice in Spanish	greater awareness of my own speech	I felt self-conscious
Stage seven	taking notes on pronunciation, grammar and content	covered many areas in my response	needed to be more organized
Stage eight	responding in kind	gave students additional clues for meaning	not always possible
Stage nine	two columns: one for form, one for content	organized reference to work on all areas	didn't work for student reading aloud
Stage ten	two columns: one for pronunciation, one for vocabulary	helpful for students practicing reading	only useful for students reading a prepared text

CHAPTER FOUR

SOME STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Rostom and Maha

In order to determine what the student experience had been for my Moroccan students, I conducted interviews with the beginning level students at the end of the course. I also interviewed two of the advanced students, and solicited written feedback from the rest. I collected information from my Spanish language students at several points during the course as well as at the end, through written feedback at the beginning, middle and end of the course, and through mid-semester interviews.

At the end of the beginners' course in Morocco, I interviewed Rostom and Maha about their experiences using oral journals. I was interested in finding out, among other things, what made them decide to participate in this activity. I wanted to know how they felt it had helped them to listen to their own voices as well as to mine, since I believed it could be an eye-opening experience to listen to one's own voice. I also wanted to ask them about the procedures they had followed in making their entries, assuming that the activity may have been extremely different from their perspectives and from mine. Consequently, they may have used very different

processes in recording their entries and had different problems to overcome. I also wondered what benefits they felt they had received from using oral journals, including both affective and academic aspects. I conducted the interviews in a mixture of French and English, so that the students would be able to understand me and express themselves as clearly and fully as possible.

Maha informed me that she had been very hesitant about participating in an oral dialog journal at first, but since she saw that Rostom was doing it she decided to "try her luck." Rostom chose to do an oral journal for another, very specific reason. He felt that it would be good practice for the listening comprehension section of the TOEFL, which he was planning to take at some time in the future.

Neither Maha nor Rostom found English pronunciation to be very difficult, but Maha expressed that the experience of doing an oral journal with me had helped her to speak more easily, and she found her increase in fluency to be very encouraging.

Both Maha and Rostom thought that it was useful to listen to their own voices when speaking English. Rostom would listen to his own entries twice, and he said that this helped his speaking in class. Listening to my voice on the cassette at home was also useful for him, and Rostom told me that he could understand almost everything I said, except for a few words.

I was surprized to see how both Maha and Rostom incorporated

writing into their oral journals, but in very different ways. Maha would begin by listening to my response twice, and then write a response with the help of her sister. At first her sister helped her with her first drafts, then she composed her answers on her own and her sister would correct her errors. After correcting her errors, Maha recorded her response. Then she would listen to her entry once. Rostom also listened to my response twice each time. He then "tried to understand" what I had said, and he "learned" a few of my sentences. He listened a third time, and then recorded his answer. He usually wrote several words and sentences during this process - what I had said and what he had looked up in the dictionary. He occasionally used writing before he recorded; but only a few words, not entire sentences.

Maha told me that the most important benefits of oral journaling for her were to learn to speak fluently and to have contact with the teacher. She felt that we knew each other better after having engaged in this activity, and particularly enjoyed my telling her about my brothers, whom she thought were quite handsome. (At one point, she asked to see a picture of them.) Rostom felt that the main advantage of oral journals for him was that they prepared you for oral conversation. "If I have a conversation with a person who speaks only English, I don't think I'm going to write; I must understand what he says." In this sense, he found oral journals to be realistic. Rostom also believed that he knew me better

after this activity and felt that we had become friends.

When asked what problems they had encountered doing oral journals, they both replied that they hadn't experienced any problems. The level of difficulty had been appropriate, they felt satisfied with their progress, they had had no technical difficulties, and they had enjoyed the experience.

Both Maha and Rostom's experiences suggest that the oral journal had been an effective tool to promote communication and understanding between teacher and student, as equals. In terms of their development as learners, they were both capable of verbalizing their own goals for their oral journals, and of devising techniques to work towards these goals. By drawing on their inner resources and personal learning strategies, they were able to direct their own learning.

Najib and Najat

Two students from my advanced pronunciation class volunteered to meet with me so that I could record an interview with them about their experiences using oral journals. While Rostom and Maha seemed to feel fairly confident with their spoken English, my advanced students were quite self-conscious about their speaking abilities. When I asked Najat what she had become aware of as a result of oral journaling, she replied, "I don't like listening my English pronunciation." [sic] Both Najat and Najib felt that their pronunciation was not good, and improving their spoken

English was an important goal for them.

Najat and Najib both felt that the oral journal was the most useful thing they did in the pronunciation class. They both told me that they used their tapes to compare their speech with mine, which they consciously used as a model. Najat said that she had to listen to the tape many times in order to understand what I said. She pointed out that I spoke too quickly on the tape. Najib, on the other hand, listened many times and repeated after me, trying his best to imitate my speech. His younger brother also helped him by letting him know when his pronunciation was coming close to mine.

Both students felt that the dialog between student and teacher was interesting and useful. Najib thought that it was much more interesting to have a dialog about "what you do in your life," rather than focusing on pronunciation or repeating sentences, which was the original function of the tape before using it as a journal.

For both Najat and Najib it was helpful to listen to themselves speaking English on tape, although Najat felt very self-conscious. For Najat the main benefit was being able to compare our voices, while Najib told me that it helped him "to know the mistakes that I do in pronunciation." [sic] Najib also felt that this had made him more aware of vowel sounds and stress.

I asked Najib and Najat if they had any ideas about what they would

do with their cassettes in the future. They both said they might listen to them again, but couldn't think of any specific uses.

Much of the written feedback that I received from the other students seemed to back up what Najat and Najib had told me. In response to the question, "How did it help you to listen to your own voice on tape?" the replies fell into three categories: that they could compare their voices with mine, that they became aware of their mistakes and that they could correct their mistakes. They all felt that they could communicate with me through the tape, and the general feeling was that it had been a very positive experience. Several students felt that they could prepare a topic or think more thoroughly about what they wanted to say before speaking on the tape, which they couldn't do in class. One student felt that it was a good test of his grammar and pronunciation, since he believed our successful communication would depend on that. Another said, "I felt delighted because it was helpful to have a confident in the tape." [sic] Most of the students listened to the tapes several times at home; all except one emphasized their efforts to imitate my voice.

Spanish students

My Spanish language students also expressed enthusiasm for oral dialog journals at all stages. As with my Moroccan students, I was interested in finding out about what phases they went through in listening

to my entries and making their recordings, how it helped them to listen to their own voices, how they felt they had benefited from using oral journals, and what problems they may have had. Also, since the Moroccan students had come up with so many ways to use these tapes, I was interested in seeing how the Spanish students used them at home to meet their own personal language needs.

The Recording Process

In the written feedback, I asked the students what process they went through the first time they recorded, and how it changed with subsequent recordings. Susan stated that she wrote down what she wanted to say first, because she felt unsure of the verbs. After recording the message, she wished she had practiced it aloud first. The second time she recorded, she practiced aloud first. This time she wrote out the first part of her message, but did the rest of it from an outline. As she progressed with her journal she continued to write out her monologue before she recorded it, and tried to record it more quickly to gain fluency.

Michelle's process was similar to Susan's in that she also worked from a written text, but instead of writing the text, she practiced with readings from a textbook. At first, Michelle had considered writing her entries first, but then decided that this would be a good opportunity to practice "correct" language. When I questioned her about the effectiveness of

practicing reading out loud, she said that she felt it was helping. The only change she made in the process in subsequent recordings was to respond to or question my comments before reading the next text.

June, like Susan, used writing to prepare for her recording, but instead of writing a script, she thought about what she was going to say and then made a list. She wrote that she sometimes felt that she didn't have enough to say; since she was generating all of the language, it felt to her like a one-way conversation. For her second recording, she listened to my entry once through without stopping, to see if she could understand everything using clues from the context. Then she replayed the recording several times, taking notes on the content and noting any new vocabulary. She continued to use this strategy throughout her oral journaling experience.

Amy concentrated more on setting a mood before making her first recording. She wanted to be relaxed, so she waited for a relaxing moment. Then she set up her cassette box, tested it and began recording. She didn't listen to her entry afterwards. She followed the same procedure for the second recording. Her rationale was that she wanted to keep the activity creative and spontaneous.

When asked approximately how much time they spent on an average recording, Michelle and Amy responded that they spent about 10 or 15 minutes, while June and Susan took about an hour.

Student Listening Strategies

The four participants also had different methods of approaching the listening part of the activity. Susan listened to my responses three times, and tried to catch everything I said. She found it helpful to try to write down words or phrases she was unfamiliar with, and try to use them in her response. Michelle usually listened to my response once without stopping, then listened again to make sure she understood everything. She sometimes wrote down any points she wanted to remember to react to in her response.

June, in addition to listening to my entry several times and taking notes, as described above, stated, "I am aware of your grammar, and this helps me to understand my errors more." She tried to understand the general idea of my message first, dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary later. She said that she listened for inflection and intonation in my voice, so that she could better understand when I was asking her a question. This also helped her compensate for the absence of non-verbal communication.

Amy was the only student that used no writing in her journaling process. She just listened to my message and tried to understand it, without taking notes.

A Way and Ways

The wide variety of methods used by the students in their journaling demonstrates the broad spectrum of ways oral dialog journals could be

useful. It also reflects how oral journals can be adapted by students to fit their individual learning styles.

June felt the activity helped her with grammar, pronunciation and listening, and listening to herself helped her to hear her mistakes and realize the limitations of her vocabulary. Through the journal, she could feel that she was receiving individualized and direct help from her teacher. Amy appreciated the opportunity to speak outside of class time. Susan was very enthusiastic about the opportunity it afforded her to hear me speak at a normal rate, with the chance to go back and listen to whatever she missed as many times as she needed to. She felt that this was the best way she knew of to practice listening. She enjoyed the fact that "it was kept casual - like the real world." She also appreciated the technique I used to correct her, by using structures she had used incorrectly in my responses, in a conversational way. Michelle found that her method, reading aloud, was a good way for her to practice "correct language," and to focus on her pronunciation rather than on coming up with ideas for topics.

At this point, the students made several suggestions as to how the activity could be improved. June thought it might help her to be given direct questions on a set of topics, "to help me remain focused, so that I don't stumble over what to say." She believed that this would help her to focus more on the language and less on the content. Amy, the only one who hadn't incorporated writing, thought that if she jotted down notes

during my response and made an outline before hers, it would lead to a more organized and structured tape. Michelle wondered if listening to her entry after recording it would be useful. Some options she thought of were to listen to it with me, or to listen to several entries and look for patterns. She also thought she could try discussing the readings on the tape, adding, "it might be helpful; I don't know that I necessarily want to do it." Susan claimed to be completely content with the system as it was working. No one had had any problems, although Amy mentioned that she sometimes got a little nervous.

The students were struck by several aspects of their oral journals:

> It's fun. I look forward to listening to the tape. Every week seems to be a continuity of the previous recording. I don't feel as if I'm being evaluated. I can simply talk freely and openly without worrying so much about making mistakes, however, this activity is making me more aware of my mistakes.

> I think by playing the music at the end it just allows for a little creativity and sharing.

> I loved the background music! I think it's good to have background music/noise for the practice of listening "through" other sounds - which is always the way normal speech is.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BENEFITS

The benefits of keeping an oral dialog journal include many of the benefits found in the written medium. MacDonald (1989) found that:

> Students can listen to a dialog repeatedly in the same way they can read passages over and over. They can pause whenever they wish and use dictionaries to aid both comprehension and production. Students can listen to their own speech as well, rerecording if necessary. All this is possible without the intimidation of a listener being present.

While using oral dialog journals can have innumeral benefits, the advantages my students found in keeping oral journals in the language class can be divided into 4 categories:

1. They function as a form of communication between teacher and student.
2. They increase awareness of one's own speech, for the student and for the teacher.
3. Their versatility provides an opportunity for individualized attention and learning.
4. They are a good opportunity for student initiative and creativity.

Communication

The oral journal provides a unique form of communication between the teacher and the student. It is a way to communicate ideas, request help, confide personal information, and explore the processes and techniques of second language communication itself. The use of an oral

dialog journal to communicate a request could be seen very clearly in Maha's tape, when she requested that I give her more time to participate more fully in the class (see chap. 2). I believe that Maha would have found it very difficult to convey this information to me by any other means. To begin with, Maha was very quiet in class and felt uncomfortable giving feedback in front of her peers. In her first entry in her journal, her voice was fairly shaky and she sounded almost as if she were going to cry, but in subsequent journals there was a very noticeable change in the quality of her voice. This was indicative, I believe, of a gradual increase in her confidence level while speaking to me on the tape.

She was also able to communicate her message to me because she had time to work out her thoughts in English in writing, and she had her sister to help her. While she may have felt comfortable writing to me about her problem in a written journal, hearing her voice certainly made an impact on me that I hadn't experienced in written journals, and I think she may have felt the same.

In my Spanish class, Susan also used her oral journal to tell me what grammatical areas she would like to cover and what activities she wanted to do in class:

> *¡Hay muchas cosas que hay problemas para mi en español! Número uno: El orden de las palabras en frases españoles. Nunca estoy cierto donde poner objetos directos y objetos indirectos, pronombres, reflexivos, etcetera. ¿Es posible hacer revoltillos los frases? ¿Es correcto? Número dos . . .*
>
> *(There are many things that are problematic for me in Spanish! Number one: The word order in Spanish sentences. I'm never sure of where to put the direct and indirect objects, pronouns, reflexives,*

etc. Would it be possible to do scrambled sentences? Is that correct? Number two . . .)

Although we had already discussed personal goals, preferred activities and learning styles in the Spanish class, the oral journal gave Susan a chance to think, in the privacy of her own room and without interruption, about what she wanted to accomplish in her Spanish studies. As she spoke, she became more aware of what she wanted to work on, and could mention new areas as they came to mind. Students also communicated what was going well and what things they liked about their classes, always useful information for a teacher.

As a teacher, I appreciated receiving these requests orally, especially since they can be delicate when they resemble criticism. Often, receiving requests, complaints or comments in writing can be discouraging and impersonal, since it's hard to tell how they were meant. Hearing my students' voices, I felt I was better able to perceive the feelings behind the words.

In Rostom's case, his oral journal gave him the opportunity to work on understanding the actual process of communication, with emphasis on practicing clarification techniques. Since he was in a class with 19 other students, there were really no times, except through the taped journal, when the two of us had a sustained conversation. The negotiation of meaning that occurred in our taped conversations gave both of us a precise record of what was understood and what wasn't, and allowed us to practice

clarification techniques. Through this process, we both felt that we got to know each other quite well. During a recorded interview, Rostom commented that it felt like I was a member of his family when I told him about my trip from the U.S. to Morocco, since his brothers always told him about their travels. Because of our conversations, he felt that we had become friends.

Najat, Najib and my other students all shared personal information and anecdotes with me that there would not have been enough time for in class. Najat told me about her job as a teacher, which created another bond between us, since this was one more thing we had in common. Najib told me about his birthday, which gave me a chance to prepare a little party in class. Since theirs was a pronunciation class, using oral tapes seemed a more appropriate means of communication than written journals.

Awareness of Speech

From my point of view, my own awareness of my speech resulting from the use of oral journals was quite dramatic. In Morocco, it took a while for me to feel comfortable with speaking on a tape to my students. While I was teaching "live," I wasn't excessively concerned with the clarity of my speech, because I had other means of determining whether the students were following me or not. In my beginning class, I relied rather heavily on drawing pictures and miming my messages in class. I also

repeated, paraphrased, and had other students paraphrase my meaning so that it would become clear for everyone. In the oral journals, I either couldn't do these things, or didn't feel that they were appropriate to the activity. I was therefore thinking about the sound of my voice from a new perspective. The first few times I tried to make recordings, I found myself erasing and rerecording over and over again, because I felt my speech was too fast, too slow, too unclear, or too exaggerated. I was trying to sound "natural," but went through a rather unnatural process to achieve this!

My experience recording in Spanish was probably more similar to some of the experiences my students had, particularly the advanced students. In my pronunciation class, several students said that they had learned "how bad their English pronunciation was" from this activity. After making my first recordings in Spanish, I wrote in my journal, "I feel nervous/ uncomfortable with my own voice; for this reason perhaps I can relate to my students' nervousness more." I felt that perhaps I shouldn't do an oral journal since I wasn't a native speaker, but then a third party pointed out to me that if I was competent enough to teach the class, I was competent enough to do an oral journal, which I agreed with in theory. In retrospect, I believe that I erased and rerecorded my Spanish journals, not because I wanted to speak at i + 1 (Krashen, 1980) or for my students' benefit, but because I wanted to sound like a native speaker. It was a matter of pride. But in both languages I quickly reached a stage in which I

felt comfortable with my voice, and I believe it was very useful for me to try to listen to my voice objectively, from the students' point of view.

Affectively, the process of growing accustomed to the sound of my voice had positive results for me, and I actually believe it was a chance for me to improve my Spanish. Working with Michelle's tape was particular helpful, since she was focusing on pronunciation. I noted that she had a tendency to use an English "schwa" on unstressed syllables - and then I heard myself making the same mistake in my response! I was able to give her suggestions for improvement, and then take my own advice as well.

My awareness of my own speech centered almost exclusively on my pronunciation, in English as well as in Spanish. The student participants, on the other hand, focused on their pronunciation, their grammar and their content. When asked how it helped to listen to her own voice, Susan replied, "It doesn't help me; it makes me paranoid. It's so awful... I'm kidding. It does help. When I listen to it back, I realize what I need to work on in terms of pronunciation." Michelle said, "it's not an easy thing to do!" and rarely listened to her recordings. Amy sometimes went back and heard portions of her recordings, but didn't do it regularly. June, on the other hand, told me:

> At first, I thought it was going to be horrifying. But you know, I was pleasantly surprized . . . listening to myself speak is kind of fun . . . I don't look at the mistakes as being awful, but I do get frustrated because I realize that a lot of what I say is ungrammatical . . . I realize just how much I talk about myself, because I'm always saying "yo" or "tú."

So the oral journal not only increased her awareness of her Spanish, but also of the content of her speech and of the ideas she expressed.

Individualized Attention

The individualized attention afforded through the oral journals took many forms. I gave individualized attention in the most organized way in my pronunciation class. In this class, I gave explicit feedback to each student on areas of pronunciation that could be improved. Although this was a student-centered exercise in that each student's practice sentences were tailormade to suit his or her needs, it was very teacher-controlled, and the students later commented that they preferred the open-ended dialog. Although I sometimes used high-frequency problem areas to generate lesson plans, most correction was done systematically through modelling or by pointing errors out explicitly. Thus, each student's problem areas were addressed in a personalized way.

While the pronunciation class shared a common thread of having a special interest in improving their pronunciation, students in my other classes had very distinct goals for their journal use. Rostom felt that the oral journal was excellent preparation for his upcoming TOEFL exam; Michelle wanted to use her journal to practice reading. The individualized nature of the oral journal allowed each student to work on personalized goals; everyone could follow his or her own agenda.

Student Initiative and Creativity

The most extreme example of student initiative was probably Michelle's use of her oral journal to practice reading aloud; in this case I was working with her using a technique that I didn't feel was entirely pedagogically sound. I believe that this use of a "journal" (and I probably would not call it a journal) would not have been very useful for most students, but Michelle felt that it had been a useful experience for her. Through this learner-centered method, students were given the initiative to discuss any topic, ask any question, use any procedure, and work on any skill.

Allowing students to take the initiative in turn sparked their creativity. Music played an important role, as students recorded music for me to listen to, played background music to accompany their entries, and even sang for me. Incorporating family and friends into their entries was a very creative way of introducing me to their lives outside of the classroom. Through my efforts to respond in kind, students encouraged me to be creative as their teacher.

CHAPTER SIX

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

After giving two presentations on the use of oral dialog journals (Sandanona, June 1993 and NNETESOL, November 1993) and after speaking with other teachers about this technique, I have collected questions about potential problems that oral dialog journals could pose. The primary areas of concern were with time, equipment, and correction.

Time

Time was also a major concern for me, and for this reason I looked for ways to respond to oral journals as efficiently as possible. While it would be possible to complete the process in the time it takes to hear a student recording (which could be limited to, say, three minutes) plus the time it takes to respond (which could be, say, 30 to 60 seconds), I chose not to set a time limit for the students, and to address both content and correction my responses. I found that with practice I could easily spend less than a total of fifteen minutes on a two minute entry, including time spent listening, taking notes, and responding. I could often complete the process comfortably in under 10 minutes. For many teachers, this is a

manageable amount of time to spend on a weekly journal. Coreil and Massey (1993) recommend that you:

> . . . tell your students that they should set the most recent assignment ready to play once the tape is inserted in a recorder. If they do this, each tape should take a maximum of ten minutes to process, very possibly eight minutes or less.

Equipment

"Are there ever any problems with equipment?" is a common question, to which the answer is yes. I have not run into any shortages of tape recorders thus far; I usually keep a couple of extras on hand, and I have loaned these out to students. Most of my students, in both Vermont and Morocco, had their own tape recorders or could borrow them from friends. In terms of sound quality, one of my students in Morocco, Fedoua, once handed in an unintelligible recording. I returned it to her and asked her if she could record another message. She was able to borrow a recorder from a friend and make a much clearer recording. One of my students of Spanish was recording over a used tape, using a walkman that only recorded on one track. We solved the problem by erasing the old tape before she made any more recordings.

Error Correction

"How do you correct an oral journal?" I feel that the question of correction is very subjective, and depends on the teaching and learning

styles involved. Still, the oral journal lends itself to a variety of correction styles. Much doubt has been expressed as to whether correcting through the "understanding response" or modelling technique is effective. Here are some student reactions:

> Susan: I can keep going back, and it was when you corrected me with one of those, you know, understanding responses, I think I said "para tú" and you said "para ti" . . .
>
> June: . . . I think I'm so concerned with getting the message, it's hard for me to really catch any correction that you've made in my speech.
>
> Amy: I think you reiterate some things that I say, "It sounds like that event was fine," you respond to everything that I've said. I notice that you put things in correct tenses for me; I've picked up on some of it.

These comments indicate that while correction through modelling was often effective, it was not effective for all of the students all of the time.

Whether dialog journals should be used exclusively to explore and communicate ideas in a safe environment or as another forum for error correction has been debated for quite some time. Payton and Reed (1990) state:

> The teacher may model some of the words and structures used incorrectly by the student, but the teacher's contribution to the journal is a genuine message, a response to content rather than a comment on form . . .

While the generally accepted approach is not to correct errors overtly, students often express that they would feel more comfortable with correction. Paul Jones (1988), in discussing written dialog journals, suggests holding individual conferences with students in order to discuss

errors, or using a "grammatical P.S," in which corrections are noted at the end of the teacher's entry, after responding to content. Both of these techniques can be used with oral journals, as they don't require any marking or altering of the text.

The question of whether or not to correct is of utmost importance in the use of oral journals, particularly since it can be a very emotional medium of language acquisition and practice. By trying various forms of correction and eliciting student feedback, the most comfortable and effective way to correct each student can be identified.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Learner-Centered Oral Dialog Journals

The techniques used in keeping an oral dialog journal depend on the goals of the teacher, the individual students, the class as a group, the time available to all parties involved, the level of the students, and the availability of equipment. Taking a learner-centered approach to oral journaling allows for flexibility in the classroom, in that each student can set and work towards achieving his or her individual goals. This approach would have obvious applications in a multi-level class, as the teacher could attend to individual needs of students at different levels. In this study, I was able to attend to the individual needs of students who, although they had similar levels of English proficiency, wanted to achieve a variety of different goals.

Allowing students to take responsibilty for identifying and working towards their goals can be tremendously motivating, and all of the students who began oral journaling kept up their journals fairly regularly throughout the course. If the assignment had been obligatory, rather than voluntary, there might have been a much higher attrition rate. The fact

that these students chose to participate in this activity probably contributed towards their willingness to stick with it.

While my experience with student writing has been that students often find it hard to think of something to write about if they're not given a topic, students seemed to feel comfortable "rambling on" on their tapes. Although a couple of students mentioned in their feedback that it might be useful to have a list of topics to choose from, no one seemed to be at a loss for things to say or do while their journals were in progress.

Student Goals

In the course of our experiences with oral journals, my students and I have worked on improving pronunciation, grammar, listening, writing, fluency, vocabulary, communicating our needs, overcoming oral communication problems, introducing elements of students' personal lives, developing student initiative, becoming aware of our voices, being creative, and sharing culture, to name a few of the most salient areas.

The amazing variety of possible techniques and uses available for oral journals manifests itself in the ways my students used their journals, always of their own initiative. To work on pronunciation, students practiced listening to the teacher's pronunciation, repeating after the teacher or asking a third party's advice. Listening to a student entry and then a teacher response was one way for students to go back and correct

errors in grammar as well as pronunciation. They reviewed the grammar studied in class by practicing these structures in context on the tape. Writing was practiced in various ways; some students wrote down some of my sentences as a dictation, others wrote out what they were going to say before speaking. Students practiced fluency by speaking about what was on their minds without preparing notes ahead of time. To work on vocabulary, they jotted down words they didn't understand and looked them up in a dictionary, or asked me in their next entry. To overcome communication problems, students practiced asking for clarification and giving understanding responses. And students brought English outside the classroom and into their daily lives by doing journals with friends from class and by introducing me to family members and friends who I would not have met otherwise.

Teacher Goals

My main goals as a teacher were to give students the initiative to use their tapes to suit their needs, to communicate effectively with the students, to find an appropriate way to correct errors, and to keep a record of how the process developed and changed.

All of the students developed ways to use their journals independently. Although my instructions were minimal, none of the students in this study asked for suggestions on how to use their journals.

When asked, they were able to articulate how they used their journals, and why they used them in this way. This indicates the remarkable ability of these particular students to direct their own learning.

Communication with students was enhanced in several important ways. Students such as Maha had the opportunity to relay crucial messages pertaining to the class. On another level, other students, such as Rostom, practiced clarification techniques for improving communication. As students shared their worlds with me, I began to have a better understanding of them as individuals and of their culture as a whole.

I discovered that errors of grammar and pronunciation could be corrected either overtly or through modelling on the tape, or through group activies in class. Different students seemed to respond better to one or the other, or a combination of error correction techniques.

My final goal, to keep a record of the development of the process, is embodied in this paper.

A Final Reflection

All of my students enjoyed keeping oral journals. When I met them outside of class, they often asked me if I had listened to their latest entries, and they devised their own schedules for recording entries, always turning their tapes in of their own initiative. Several students expressed enthusiasm for speaking rather than writing, and may have

chosen to keep oral journals for this reason. It must be borne in mind that these students chose to participate; no one was forced to keep an oral journal.

Students noticed a marked improvement in their fluency, grammar, pronunciation and self-confidence. I also saw the students improve over time in these areas as I listened to their journals. It is difficult to determine whether oral journals are a measure or a cause of this improvement, but I believe they have played an important role as both.

Looking to the future, increasing the students' awareness of their journaling goals may help them to benefit further from the process. By asking students to think about what they hope to achieve through oral journaling before they begin, they may be better able to determine what techniques would be most useful for them. I would also ask students what type of error correction they feel most comfortable with, if any. Being aware of this aspect of my students' learning styles would help me to be more sensitive to individual students' needs, and more efficient with the time I spend responding.

The list of ways the students in this study benefitted from using oral journals is long. Still, the most important benefits of oral journaling are not easy to measure. Through the oral journal, language becomes more than an in-class exercise. It becomes a means to building a bridge of understanding and trust between the teacher and student.

EPILOGUE

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The number of ways to use oral dialog journals is infinite, because there will always be as many ways of personalizing the language-learning process through oral journals as there are language students. Subsequent to the studies cited in this paper, I continued to use oral journals with two students in an advanced Spanish class. These students were also M.A.T. candidates at the School for International Training. The course lasted 16 weeks, and students had the option of keep an oral or written journal.

The students who kept oral journals were given questionnaires to fill out towards the beginning and towards the end of the course. I found their responses to be very insightful. Their willingness to discuss their personal experiences helps to shed more light on many aspects of oral journalling. The honesty and thoroughness with which they share their insights provide us with a glimpse inside the minds of two students learning a language through oral journals, each one in his or her own individual way.

The students responded to a series of questions that were representative of many of the areas I explored in my investigation of ways

to use oral journals. I believe that these students' answers can serve to deepen our understanding of this learner-centered method of using oral journals. I chose to let the students express themselves here in their own words, rather than paraphrasing them, while I limit myself to interpreting their comments.

First Questionnaire

I solicited feedback from the following questions:

1. What process did you go through in making your first recording?

E: I just started talking. But I thought it was a mistake.

L: I thought about everything on my mind. I roughly organized the order of my topics, and I casually turned on the tape recorder. The words flowed more smoothly than I expected. It was quite enjoyable actually.

Elizabeth began using her oral journal spontaneously, with no preparation. She was able to self-evaluate the effectiveness of her process, and take action to improve it, as she explains in her answer to question 2. Lance was more concerned with mental preparation; which is reminiscent of Amy's focus in Chapter 3. He was more concerned with what he felt while making the recording, rather than with what he did.

2. What did you do differently the second time (or third or fourth time) you recorded?

E: I made a little outline of things I wanted to talk about. I recorded. I listened to my recording and transcribed it. I corrected it. I re-recorded it.

L: The first time, I recorded in the basement of my dorm, where I thought it'd be quieter. I wanted the quiet for the quality of the

recording; but I also think I went downstairs because I was insecure of other people hearing me speak Spanish. But ever since then I've felt more comfortable (less inhibited, perhaps), and I have done all the recordings in the cozy comfort of my own lil' room!

In finding a way to improve the effectiveness of her oral journal, Elizabeth went to a lot of work, recording, listening, correcting and recording again. This would indicate a high level of motivation on her part. She quickly developed a system that worked well for her, although it may well not have worked for anyone else in the class because of the time it required. This highlights once again the importance of allowing students to develop their own methods for using their oral journals.

Lance's change was not one of procedure, but of atmosphere. He began by recording in the basement, but ended up recording in his dorm room. (It should be noted, judging from the background noise and interruptions present in his recordings, that the basement is a private place and his dorm room is a public place.) He gained in security, and was able to speak to the recorder in front of others, indicating an increased level of comfort with the language and the activity. I found that, as a teacher, I went through a similar process of moving from insecurity to security in responding to journal entries.

3. What do you do when you listen to my response?

E: I listen. When you gave me corrections I wrote them down. And I pick out themes to talk about later.

L: Sometimes I jot down notes, words I can't understand, words I don't know, questions I have about your message or the actual recording itself.

Both Elizabeth and Lance took notes as they listened to my responses, just as I did when I listened to their messages. Elizabeth took notes on my corrections (form) and topics she wanted to discuss further (content). Lance took notes on words he didn't understand (listening comprehension), new words (vocabulary), and questions about my message (content).

4. How much time do you spend on this activity?

E: Two hours per week, maybe more. I'm going to cut down the message time, so I can reduce the time spent all together.

L: Between 20 - 30 minutes.

Elizabeth was more concerned with the time factor than Lance, probably because she was working through a longer process.

5. How is this activity useful?

E: I can hear my own mistakes, I can hear my improvement. I'm an auditory learner and it really helps there. I like being able to talk and hear my Spanish.

L: It's free and parameter-less. It's a forum for ideas, thoughts, light-heartedness. It's pure practice. It's communication. It's quite creative.

Elizabeth's comments indicate a high level of awareness of herself as a language learner, and an increased awareness of her own language as a result of listening to her oral journal. She was also able to use her journal as a tool for self-evaluation. Lance found oral dialog journals useful because of the lack of restrictions placed on the activity. An advantage of giving students control over how to use their journals, then, is that they can put as many or as few restrictions on the activity as they feel is appropriate.

6. How could it be more useful?

E: Connect themes with stuff done in class so as to reinforce work: vocabulary, grammar, etc., done in class. I can do this as easily as you can.

L: Perhaps if you handed out -or if you and the students co-generated- a list of useful topics/issues from which we/you could choose to "platicar" (chat) if and when you wanted to or got stuck.

Elizabeth's last comment shows her willingness to take responsibility for her own learning, and her suggestion is self-directed as much as it is directed towards me. Lance, in his suggestion, is careful to preserve equality between teacher and student. Not wanting to restrict what he considers to be a "free" activity, the list of topics would not lead to more teacher control, but would serve as an additional option for the student as well as the teacher.

7. Did you have any problems?

E: I hate to hear myself on tape, especially when I have a cold. I think it's a danger to have your messages erased.

L: Absolutely none. Of course the appropriate equipment is necessary. Fortunately I have it, but it might not be so easy for other students.

Elizabeth is speaking from personal experience; she accidently erased one of my responses during the course. Lance was projecting to a future situation, one in which his students might not have easy access to tape recorders, due to financial or other considerations.

8. Is there anything else that strikes you about this activity that you would like to tell me about?

E: I love it but it takes a lot of time. It definitely feels like extra work. Sometimes I don't know how to correct my own work so I get Marianna, my tutor to help me. I wonder if you can help me too. Your suggestion about recording the corrected version after the uncorrected is good but I haven't had time to listen to both

together yet.

L: Keep up the good work!

Elizabeth's comments are further evidence of ther high motivation. She did take my advice and record both uncorrected and corrected versions in her subsequent entries.

Second Questionnaire

When there was one week left in the course, I asked Lance and Elizabeth to fill out another questionnaire. While the first questionnaire was designed to capture early impressions, the purpose of this questionnaire was to glean more information about how their processes had developed, what results they had obtained, and how they felt about the activity overall.

1. Are you doing anything differently now - has the process you use with your oral dialog journal changed?

E: No. I've still been writing everything out, except for the last time, when I was pressed for time.

L: I don't think so. Maybe I'm talking faster, freer and less "consciously," so to speak.

Both Lance and Elizabeth developed their techniques very quickly, and found that they suited their needs. They didn't feel that they needed to experiment with different techniques. This is in contrast with the long process I went through to find the most efficient and efective way to respond.

2. After having experienced oral dialog journals as a student, would you use them as a teacher? Why or why not? How would you use them?

E: Yes, I would. I might make up a menu of things for students to do and connect it with what's going on in class -but only if they were having trouble coming up with ideas.

L: Yes!! Because this has been my favorite part of our course. I could use them for a needs/level assessment, or just for enjoyment.

Elizabeth's idea for using oral journals as a teacher is similar to the sugestion she made above for using the journal as a student. Since she has used oral dialog journals as a student, she has experienced them from a student's perspective, and is in a better position to know what kind of support her students might need. Lance's idea of using oral journals as a tool for needs assessment may have come from my having based some classroom activities on problem areas that surged in oral journals. Elizabeth seems to feel that oral journals were useful to supplement class work, while Lance's enthusiasm for oral journals stems from the fact that it was fun.

3. What have you learned from keeping an oral journal?

E: It helped me to see "fossilized" language. I learned to self-correct, with a little help. My fluency leaped; it helped revive my Spanish. It reinforced what we were studying at the time. It's like a cycle, getting tighter and tighter.

L: I have improved my listening comprehension and speaking skills. I have learned how to feel comfortable talking to a machine - not an easy feat!

I also noticed a great improvement in Elizabeth's fluency over the course of her recordings. While being able to talk to a machine may not be a high-priority function when learning a second language, recording one's voice can be a very useful tool to develop awareness of one's speech, and in this sense Lance became more comfortable with another tool for language

learning which he can continue to use in the future.

4. What would you do differently if you could do it again?

E: Nothing.

L: I'd listen to my entries more before turning them in.

Lance's comment reflects the usefulness of listening to one's own voice. Elizabeth, through her error correction procedure, was already doing this systematically and with a critical ear.

5. If you have time, listen to some previous entries on the tape. What are you aware of as you listen to our conversation?

E: Your recordings become longer as time goes on. We talk less and less about Spanish.

L: I'm aware of the fact that you put lots of time, energy and care into your entries. I think subconsciously, that positively affected my motivation and commitment to the oral dialog journal.

I was surprised by the answers to this question, as I expected their answers to refer to their own recordings, and perhaps to their evaluation of their improvement. The fact the they responded by commenting on my responses shows the effect of the teacher's involvement on student motivation, as Lance points out.

6. Do you ever erase or re-record?

E: After I record once I correct it and then record the entire thing.

L: No.

The fact that Lance never erased an entry reflects a self-assurance which I, as a teacher, was lacking when I first began using oral journals.

7. How does it help to listen to your own voice?

E: It was a very powerful thing to hear my mistakes as well as my improvements.

L: It particularly helps me in noticing my pause, or stop time. Dead space, etc.

Elizabeth and Lance were able to become aware of different aspects of their speech. Elizabeth concentrated primarily on grammatical accuracy, while Lance became more aware of the overall flow of his speech.

8. Have you picked up on any error correction?

E: I don't know. The reason I do the oral dialog journal this way is that I've read that it's really the only way to have error correction sink in.

L: Yes, both through "understanding responses" and straight correction. Both are great.

I had not mentioned anything about correction to either Lance or Elizabeth until they attended the presentation I gave at NNETESOL, in which I discussed the type of error correction I used. I was quite curious to see if they had been aware of the corrections I had made through modelling, and Lance said that he had. In Elizabeth's case, I didn't focus on correcting errors in this way, since she had taken on the responsibilty of correcting her own mistakes with the help of her tutor. I corrected specific structures overtly when Lance asked me if certain statements were correct. This combination of correction techniques seemed to work well for him.

Elizabeth had mentioned to me that she had read about this method of correction, transcribing her speech and then correcting it. This was a third way to correct errors, one that I had not thought of using.

9. Is it more useful to write before you record, or after, as a dictation?

E: I transcribe what I say, and then correct it. I think it's very

useful.

L: Before, for note-taking.

Elizabeth found it more useful to write after she recorded, as a transcription, Lance found it more useful to write before he recorded, as a preparation. They wrote at different times during the process in order to reach different ends.

10. Which of these elements are most important to you in your oral journal: communicating ideas, error correction, fluency, grammar, listening, pronunciation, student initiative?

E: Error correction, fluency and student initiative.

L: 1. communicating ideas, 2. listening, 3. fluency, 4. student initiative.

Elizabeth did not include grammar in her list of priorities although she spent a great amount of time correcting her grammatical inaccuracies and recording the grammatically correct version. It seems that the process of learning to correct errors was more important to her than being grammatically accurate the first time. Although I concentrated my efforts on ways to help the students improve their grammar and pronunciation, these appeared to be the least important areas for both Lance and Elizabeth.

11. How is it for you doing an oral journal with a non-native speaker? Would you prefer a native speaker?

E: I don't think it matters. You know grammar much more explicitly than a native speaker would.

L: It doesn't matter to me because you speak very well.

Elizabeth and Lance did not share my concern about not being a good

enough model; they did not demand perfection. They also did not list pronunciation as a priority; my concern with my Spanish was related to pronunciation rather than grammar or fluency.

12. How does this compare to written dialog journals?

E: I like it more. It works on speaking.

L: It's totally different for me. I look forward more to speaking than I often do to writing, because speaking is less "cerebral" for me.

Elizabeth and Lance's comments reinforce those made by students in earlier classes; there is a tendency to associate speaking with enjoyment, informality.

13. What role does music play?

E: I use it for background sometimes. Someday I might sing a song.

L: Listen to the last entry and see! An important role for me, especially given my passion for music, live and recorded. It just seems natural to incorporate music into the oral dialog journal.

Lance finished his last entry with an original guitar composition! Responding in kind, I played an original song for him. It was a fitting ending, as we had discussed and shared music on the tape several times during the course.

Conclusion

Both Elizabeth and Lance settled into a system early in the journaling process. In Elizabeth's case, she had read about a particular technique for self-correction and wanted to try it. Lance was more interested in developing fluency, and practiced a more unstructured

approach, similar to the one June had used. He differed from June in that his tape was more "social," incorporating other people.

The oral journal experience built on many areas for Lance and Elizabeth, including knowledge of Spanish, language acquisition skills, attitude towards language learning, and awareness of speech. Elizabeth was able to increase her knowledge of Spanish through listening to my entries and correcting her entries with the help of her tutor. Lance increased his knowledge by asking questions and listening for different kinds of error correction in my response. By creating their own journaling processes both Lance and Elizabeth developed a tool for language acquisition - one they could use as students or as teachers. Elizabeth learned to self-correct, an important skill for her. Lance was aware of improvement in listening comprehension and speaking skills. They further developed already positive attitudes towards language learning, as they found the journaling to be creative, fun and useful. Their awareness increased through listening to their own voices. Lance became aware of hesitations or pauses in his speech. Elizabeth found listening to her own voice to be a very powerful experience, as she could hear her own mistakes as well as her improvement.

Overall, their feelings towards oral dialog journals were very positive. This is evidenced by their motivation, the effort they put into their journals, and their enthusiasm about the prospect of using oral

journals as teachers.

Lance's and Elizabeth's methods of using oral journals were not only different from each other's; they were in many ways different from any other student's. Elizabeth's was radically different, in that she incorporated a rigorous system of self-correction. Since I had accumulated a variety of goals and techniques from other students, I expected to have some repetition. But ways of using oral journals seemed to be as varied as the students themselves.

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